



**Site Name: Shrule Turlough SAC**

**Site Code: 000525**

Shrule Turlough is orientated east-west in an extensive natural basin surrounded by gently undulating farmland, with slightly higher scrub-covered land to the north. Around the edges of the turlough there are scattered boulders and some limestone outcrops. It is found just north-west of the village of Shrule in Co. Mayo.

The site is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) selected for the following habitats and/or species listed on Annex I / II of the E.U. Habitats Directive (\* = priority; numbers in brackets are Natura 2000 codes):

[3180] Turloughs*
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This is a large, highly oligotrophic turlough, with thick marl and peat deposits. There is no above-ground outflow from the turlough. Drainage attempts have been made by enlarging the swallow holes, but the turlough still floods regularly and it seems to show little modification due to the drainage efforts. Peat cutting no longer occurs but cattle graze on reclaimed peat margins and around the swallow holes.

Shrule Turlough has a high level of physical and vegetation diversity, and supports the second largest number of plant communities of any turlough surveyed (18 in all). Fen vegetation is especially well-developed, with the largest extent of both Great Fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*) fen and Black Bog-rush (*Schoenus nigricans*) fen found in any turlough. The site also supports important stands of tall sedge and yellow sedge communities. The site supports a range of plants that are quite rare in turloughs, among them Whorled Water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum verticillatum*), Least Bur-reed (*Sparganium minimum*), Greater Bladderwort (*Utricularia vulgaris*) and Creeping Yellow-Cress (*Rorippa sylvestris*).

Lough Lee, located at the southern end of the site, is surrounded by wet grassland and, at its northern side, by a mosaic of species-rich wet and dry grassland with outcropping limestone. The lough itself supports beds of Common Reed (*Phragmites australis*).

Shrule turlough has a small catchment area and seems to be little modified by human activities. The oligotrophic and peaty nature of the site makes it unusual in the general range of turloughs and gives it a very significant ecological value. In addition, the site is large and seemingly largely uninfluenced by the surrounding land uses. Its high vegetation diversity and the presence of a number of species generally rare in turloughs is of further interest.